Shepard (C. H.)

ALCOHOL VERSUS ANIMAL POISON.

Read before the American Medical Temperance Association, in the Section on State Medicine at the Forty-eighth Annual Meeting of the American Medical Association, held at Philadelphia, Pa., June 1–4, 1897.

BY CHAS. H. SHEPARD, M.D.
BROOKLYN, N. Y.

Presented by the author

REPRINTED FROM
THE JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION.
NOVEMBER 13, 1897.

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AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION PRESS.
1897.

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ALCOHOL VERSUS ANIMAL POISON.

BY CHAS. H. SHEPARD, M.D.

Animal poison is by no means uncommon, and so quick and mysterious is its action that a prompt remedy is a vital necessity. There is good reason to believe that the numerous remedies that have been recommended from earliest times as antidotes for animal poison are worthless, as they have not the properties commonly ascribed to them. The paucity of remedies is so great that alcohol is the one which comes most quickly to the mind of those who have been taught in the traditions of the past, and who are not fully aware of its action on the human system. We shall endeavor to show that the action of alcohol is not helpful; on the contrary it is really detrimental, and also that there is a better way out of the difficulty.

If we get a splinter in the body, vital energy is aroused to get rid of the offending substance, inflammation is set up and sloughing goes on until the splinter is voided. If the splinter is covered with acrid material, the same process is intensified and nature endeavors to eliminate the offending substance through the natural excretions. Upon the peculiarity of the material depends the direction of this elimination.

It is well known that some poisons are thrown off by the kidneys, some by the lungs, while others again

are attacked by all the emunctories. The difference in the power of the system to absorb different substances, appropriate whatever can be utilized, and throw off whatever can not be used, is sometimes called idiosyncrasy, but more properly it may be called vital resistance, and upon the integrity of this power rests the ability to combat disease in all its forms, whether it be the absorption of any animal virus or the poison resulting from undigested food. This ability is in proportion to the integrity and soundness of every tissue and organ of the body. This may be illustrated by the fact that with a person suffering from kidney disease, which necessarily impedes elimination, the ordinary effects of a poison are intensified; therefore whatever aids in the promotion of good health, or in other words, the normal action of all the functions, will contribute to the safety of the individual in any and every emergency.

When a person dies from the effect of poisoning, it is simply because the system was unable to eliminate the offending substance and was exhausted in the effort. There is a tolerance of some substances which frequently results in chronic disease, and again it is shown in what is called the cumulative effect or acute disease.

Those who would hold that a substance is at one time a medicament, and at another time a poison, have much trouble in drawing the line between the beneficial and the poisonous effect. The idea that poisonous substances act on the system is responsible for many grave mistakes, whereas always and under all circumstances it is the system that does all the action.

There might be some excuse for the idea that dis-

ease is an entity, from the facts that have been brought to light by the germ theory, but this theory is of recent date, while the entity theory is as old as superstition.

Snake poison, which may be cited as a type of other animal poisons, takes effect through the circulation, and acts by paralyzing the nerve centers and by altering the condition of the blood. In ordinary cases death seems to take place by arrest of respiration from paralysis of the nerves of motion. The poison also acts septically, producing at a later period sloughing and hemorrhage.

Dr. Calmette, a noted French scientist, claims that what is poisonous in the snake's bite, is not the venom absorbed into the blood, but a principle which the blood itself has developed out of the poison. This would necessitate very quick action when the poison is inserted in one of the large veins, as that is followed by instant death.

The following cases fairly represent some of the tragedies that are occurring in our everyday life.

A man 60 years old falls and dislocates his finger, he goes to the hospital, where in a short time he dies from blood-poisoning. . . . Another man 48 years old, many years a wine merchant, whose great toe was severely crushed by a heavy man stepping on it, was taken with blood-poisoning and in spite of all treatment, even to the amputation of the leg, he soon succumbed to the disease. . . . A young woman 24 years old, picks a pimple on her chin and at once her face begins to swell. In vain was all medical treatment, for in a few days she died in terrible agony. . . . About a year ago there died in Brooklyn,

N. Y., a physician in his 38th year, who six years previously received a slight scratch in his hand while performing a postmortem examination. All that medical science could suggest was done to no avail. . . . In the summer of 1896 a young woman 22 years of age was bitten on the leg by an insect. Several physicians were called in but their treatment gave no relief; blood-poisoning set in; it was decided to amputate the leg, but before it could be done she died. . . . In July, 1896, a veterinary surgeon 34 years of age, while removing a cancer from a horse pricked his finger with his knife. The wound was so slight that he forgot all about it. A few days later blood-poisoning set in and in a short time his end came. . . . Some forty years ago a man named Whitney was teasing a rattlesnake in a Broadway barroom, was bitten by the animal and, though whisky was poured down his throat by the quart, all was in vain and he soon died.

Such results seem entirely unnecessary were the proper course pursued, and at the same time they are a fearful commentary on the medical resources of the day.

The latest researches in regard to alcohol reveal it as a poison to the human system in whatever way it may be diluted or disguised. Its effect is always the same in proportion to the amount taken. It is impossible to habitually use it in any form, even in small quantities, without disease and degeneration resulting therefrom. When taken into the stomach the action is the same as with any other narcotic; the meaning of this word is *to become torpid.* It benumbs the nerves of sensation, and thus the vital resistance to any offending material is reduced, and while the patient

feels less of any disturbance the real harm goes on with accumulated force because of the lack of vitality and non-resistance of the nervous system. This loss of control is readily seen in the conversation of one who has taken what is called "a little too much." The inhibitory power of the brain is diminished.

When the body is in the throes of a vital struggle with a virulent poison it would seem to any unprejudiced mind, the height of folly to further weaken the vital resistance by the administration of any narcotic, and especially alcohol.

The eminent German, Professor Bunge, says, "All the results which on superficial observation appear to show that alcohol possesses stimulant properties, can be explained on the ground that they were due to paralysis." . . . Professors S. Weir Mitchell and E. T. Reichert on "Researches on Serpent Poison," make this notable statement: "Despite the popular creed, it is now pretty sure that many men have been killed by the alcohol given to relieve them from the effects of snake bite, and it is a matter of record that men dead drunk with whisky and then bitten have died of the bite." . . . Says Dr. Richardson, "Even a small quantity of alcohol affects the acuteness of vision."

Testimony of the most reliable character, to the fact of the injurious action of alcohol in disease could be quoted *ad libitum.*

As a great contrast to the weakness of the mass of our people who are drug-takers and alcohol-consumers, and who are liable to almost any epidemic that comes along and quickly succumb to a serious injury, may be mentioned the Turkish soldiers of today, who know

nothing of drugs as we use them, and never use alcohol in any form. During the late controversy with the Greeks, one of them was reported as having been shot in the stomach, remaining in the ranks and afterward walking ten miles. Another one who was wounded twice in the legs and once in the shoulder, continued attending to his duties for twenty-four hours, until an officer noticed his condition and ordered him to the hospital. The heat was tremendous but the troops endured it without complaint, and the doctors are astonished at the wonderful vitality of the wounded Turks, who recover with remarkable rapidity. This with good reason is attributed to their abstemious lives.

It has been stated that the Moqui Indians handle the rattlesnake with impunity, and are not inconvenienced by the occasional bite of the animal.

The rational treatment of animal poison is to endeavor to prevent the entry of the virus into the circulation, to neutralize it in the wound before it is absorbed, but when it has entered the system then everything should be done for its elimination.

The most powerful aid to the human system, and the most perfect eliminator known to man is heat. It is used with much advantage and great success by means of water, both internally and externally, but above all is its use by hot air, as in the Turkish bath, which works in harmony with every natural function, promoting the action of all the secretions and more particularly the excretions. By this means will the system unload itself of an accumulation of impurities in an incredibly short space of time, while the heat aids in destroying whatever there may be of virus therein.

Calmette, whom we have previously quoted, has shown that whatever be the source of snake venom, its active principle is destroyed by being submitted to a temperature of about 212 degrees for a variable length of time.

In the not remote future thousands of human beings will owe to the Turkish bath not only an immunity from disease in general, but also an escape from the horrors of a premature death from hydrophobia, the poison of snake bite or the slower action of infectious disease.

The mass of testimony that has been accumulating for over thirty years past is more than sufficient to convince any reasonable mind that is willing to examine the facts.

The medical profession has searched the world over and under for the means of controlling disease, while within the human body itself lies the vital power which needs only to be cultivated and exalted to its true function to banish the mass of disease from the land.